

Healthcare associated infections

Infection control is a broad and wide-ranging topic. It includes the principles and procedures necessary to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases, and is an essential component of providing comprehensive healthcare services. This fact sheet provides a general overview, however a number of more specific fact sheets are available on a variety of infection control topics.

RACGP 4th Edition Standards

- 5.3.3** Our practice has systems that minimise the risk of healthcare associated infections.

Assessment methods

- Interviews with GPs and practice staff

GPs and practice staff will be able to describe to surveyors how infection control policies and procedures are adhered to, including sterilization processes, hand hygiene, personal protective equipment, clinical waste and sharps, managing blood and body fluid spills, triage of patients with potential communicable disease, environmental cleaning, staff immunisations, and educating patients in respiratory etiquette.

- Document review

The practice will have a written infection control policy. Position statements should confirm which staff members are assigned responsibility for coordinating infection control processes. Evidence should also be available in regard to ongoing infection control education and training being provided to staff, and the mechanisms for assessing staff competencies, monitoring of the sterilisation process, sterilisation equipment maintenance and annual validation records (applicable to practices performing accreditation onsite), documented agreement with offsite sterilisation provider (if applicable), clinical waste agreements, and staff immunisation records.

Meeting the Standards

Staff should be able to confirm who, at the practice, has primary responsibility for coordinating infection control processes. This could be one staff person, or it might be one overarching person, with others being delegated individual responsibility in specific areas. All staff should be familiar with infection control processes as per the documented infection control policies. Below is a brief outline of the different infection control areas.

- **Sterilisation**

Any equipment or instruments used must be clean and safe to use. Reusable equipment must be sterilised onsite, or by using an offsite accredited facility, or practices may choose to use single use items only. Sterilisation is a detailed process and involves the correct pre-cleaning of instruments and equipment, right through to storing items

correctly so they are ready for reuse. If practices do sterilise instruments onsite, then the autoclave must be calibrated and validated annually. For more information please refer to the GPA 5.3.3 Sterilisation and Validation fact sheets.